

4.6-1 INTRODUCTION

Both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and New York State's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) require consideration of reasonably related short-term and long-term impacts of a project. These include not only the direct effects of a project, but also the indirect or secondary effects.

As defined in the federal Council on Environmental Quality's regulations (40 CFR Part 1500-1508), indirect impacts are those that are "caused by an action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable" (40 CFR 1508.8). Indirect effects can occur within the full range of impact areas, such as changes in land use, economic conditions, traffic congestion, air quality, noise, vibration, and water and natural resources. Examples of indirect effects can include growth-inducing effects and other effects from a project related to induced changes in land use patterns, population density, and growth rates, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems.

4.6-2 INDIRECT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS

As stated in Chapter 4.2.1, "Land Use," the Project site consists of private property owned by Norfolk Southern Railway Company within the boundaries of the larger Letchworth State Park, as well as a small area of parkland and private rural land outside the park. Outside the park, the Project would not result in direct effects to active land uses, since the small area (0.76 acres) of rural land that would be acquired for the Project is adjacent to an existing rail freight right-of-way and is not currently in active use. The Project would not require the removal of existing buildings or substantial changes to local roadways. The conversion of vacant rural land into the proposed railroad right-of-way would not impact farming and associated economic activities of this area.

Construction of the bridge would result in temporary indirect effects during the construction period. In addition to the direct effect of creating construction jobs at the Project site, the expenditures made by construction workers would be expected to benefit both the local and regional economy as they would likely frequent local businesses for dining and other goods and services. However, the duration of construction would be short (less than three years) and would not be expected to generate substantial, if any, new development in the area. At the same time, the temporary impacts associated with the temporary use of parkland and a portion of Park Road during construction, and the noise generated by construction would result in indirect effects to park uses, but these would not adversely impact the residential, recreational, or commercial activity in the vicinity of the Project site. Overall, therefore, the potential indirect effects of the Project would be expected to benefit rather than adversely impact social and economic conditions in the surrounding area.

4.6-3 INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

As described in Chapter 3, "Project Alternatives," the No Action Alternative assumes that the existing Portageville Bridge will remain in service and will be subject only to required maintenance. In this alternative, given the age of the bridge, it is anticipated that the bridge

would eventually be deemed unsafe for continued freight operations. At that time, the bridge would be closed to rail traffic and would remain in essentially its current state, without substantial further enhancements or alteration. Without a bridge across the Genesee River for the Southern Tier route, Norfolk Southern would either have to 1) eliminate rail freight service to several locations and for several customers, and reroute trains over other routes maintained by other railroads, which is logistically complex and would add five-hour service delays; and/or 2) cease operations on the Southern Tier route altogether, which would result in the loss of customers and routes.

In contrast, the Preferred Alternative would not restrict continued and improved operation of the Southern Tier route for transportation of rail freight. By maintaining and improving operations on the Southern Tier route, therefore, the Preferred Alternative would avoid indirect adverse environmental effects associated with the loss of this rail freight route. In the long-term, the Preferred Alternative would effectively reduce energy consumption and air pollutant emissions by avoiding longer rail routings as well as avoiding traffic congestion and increases to truck trips for movement of goods that would otherwise occur. These benefits may not be realized by the No Action Alternative, particularly if maintenance and repairs necessitate the long-term, or even the short-term, closure of the Portageville Bridge.

Letchworth State Park is a more than 14,000-acre park visited by many for its scenic vistas, historic features, natural features, and recreational opportunities. The parkland to be used for new railroad right-of-way represents a very small portion of Letchworth State Park and such use would have no direct effects on its recreational opportunities following completion of construction. While the Project would have a direct effect on natural resources because of a small area (3 acres) of land that must be cleared, the park is abundant in such resources, and its natural character would not be substantially diminished by the Project. Similarly, while implementation of the Preferred Alternative would result in impacts to historic features of Letchworth State Park (including removal of the bridge and alteration of other historic components of the park) and impacts to visual resources associated with these changes, these direct effects would not result in indirect (secondary) effects to the park, because they would not result in adverse impacts to the overall character or recreational qualities of the park. In addition, the Preferred Alternative would result in a moderate noise impact at locations in close proximity to the rail line, because of the increase in speed of trains as they approach and cross the new bridge. The area affected would be limited to a small portion of the park that is immediately adjacent to the proposed new bridge, and would not in turn result in indirect (secondary) effects in a larger area.

Overall, while the Project would directly affect a small area of the park and one of its historic structures, Letchworth State Park would continue to offer the many recreational opportunities it has always provided and it will continue to feature both historic structures and natural beauty. Therefore, the Project is not expected to result in indirect adverse impacts on the recreational quality of Letchworth State Park or to the many visitors it attracts.

4.6-4 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION

No adverse indirect (secondary) impacts were identified and therefore no mitigation is necessary.